

The Importance of Certification in Clinical Sleep Health: A Q&A With CCSH Credential Holders

By *Monica Roselli*

The Certification in Clinical Sleep Health (CCSH), offered through the Board of Registered Polysomnographic Technologists (BRPT), showcases the knowledge of those who manage patient care as health care providers and educators. In addition to meeting specific educational/clinical requirements of the CCSH, individuals must hold a Basic Life Support (BLS) certification or its equivalent, adhere to the BRPT Standards of Conduct and pass the CCSH examination.

AAST Managing Editor Monica Roselli recently spoke with four sleep professionals who have earned their CCSH credential, Betsy Dauphin, RRT, CCSH, Andrea Early, RPSGT, CCSH, Cheryl Memmini, RRT, RPSGT, CCSH, and Salvatore "Sam" Sarullo, RPSGT, CCSH, on what having the credential means to them, the impact it will have on the sleep industry and advice for those looking to sit for the CCSH exam.

What does a typical day look like for you and how do you utilize your CCSH credential in your day-to-day work?

Betsy Dauphin (BD): I work with BetterNight, a national durable medical equipment (DME) provider, so my focus is mainly on compliance with positive airway pressure (PAP) devices, rescuing PAP failures to alternative therapies and acting as a research coordinator on clinical studies. My CCSH credential and education have prepared me to better understand sleep-related breathing disorders and other issues surrounding sleep and whole-body health. It's through this coaching that patients achieve sustainable compliance. In addition, I keep my respiratory therapist license in 40 states, which allows my CCSH credential to extend into those areas as well.

Andrea Early (AE): My day consists of educating obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) patients on use, purpose and function of all PAP devices. I troubleshoot machine pressure intolerance and effectiveness, machine malfunction, mask fit issues, compliance adherence, insurance problems with reimbursement and review sleep study results and how poor sleep impacts overall health. I also collaborate on patient treatment needs and modifications to current treatment with physicians.

Cheryl Memmini (CM): I am a clinical sleep educator for a health system's own DME. I do patient education for patients diagnosed with OSA and central sleep apnea (CSA) as well as PAP setups, follow-ups and troubleshooting.

Salvatore "Sam" Sarullo (SS): My typical day involves working with patients, and family members, regarding diagnostic testing and education. The education piece not only encompasses procedural testing but almost always leads into general sleep hygiene. The CCSH education has helped me identify what patients are experiencing and how I can intervene and play a supporting role with direct or indirect influence.

What benefits do you see in obtaining the CCSH credential? How has having the credential benefited you and the work that you do?

BD: Learning about different sleep disorders and treating them is very beneficial when working in the sleep industry. Having the CCSH credential has benefited me by helping me educate patients about the disease, why treatment is needed, adverse outcomes if untreated and explaining treatment in ways they can understand. The CCSH credential also helps me educate and inform coworkers and staff on how other issues outside of sleep-disordered breathing may affect patients and their compliance with PAP therapy.

AE: The CCSH is helpful in becoming well rounded in all aspects of sleep from medications and behavior modification to PAP treatment and alternatives. This credential reminds me to stay up to date on all new trends in sleep, too.

CM: The CCSH credential is beneficial because it shows that the practitioner has studied a specific area (education of sleep disorders) and is qualified to provide this important information to patients and the general public. It has benefitted me specifically with getting the patient education process implemented as well as helping me to learn to focus on each patient as an individual with their own life circumstances, learning style and adaptability to new ideas/change. It has also increased my confidence in my ability to help people understand sleep disorders.

SS: The benefits are tremendous. It shows you have a growth mindset and are passionate regarding patient outcomes. It prepares you for expanding into additional sleep medicine roles (i.e., inpatient OSA screening, DME, and clinic) which I've had the pleasure of supporting with seamless transition and confidence.

How do you see the CCSH credential impacting the future of the sleep industry?

BD: The CCSH credential will allow Registered Polysomnographic Technologist (RPSGT), Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) and nursing staff to implement sleep programs across the country, increasing diagnostic and screening potential. It will carve out a whole new space for us to practice in, and it will assist in bringing sleep education out of the dark and into the light.

Pursuing the CCSH credential provides clinical education for professionals wishing to make a more significant difference in the lives of their patients.

AE: When/if services are reimbursable, I see it taking the weight off providers to help the sleep patient in all modes of treatment. Hopefully, it will lead to more hospital consults or physician office visit consults for CCSH staff to talk to patients about healthy sleep and how it affects the body.

CM: The CCSH credential is very versatile. You can work for a health system, DME, physician's office or even go to work for yourself and start your own sleep coaching business.

The CCSH role is a very good link between sleep diagnosis and treatment and the sleep physician and ongoing therapy success. I believe this credential can decrease the amount of time from diagnosis to successful therapy. Patients often find it easier and less intimidating to relate to us and often ask us questions they don't ask their physicians. When patients have a home sleep apnea test (HSAT), get a diagnosis of OSA and go directly onto auto-titrating positive airway pressure (Auto-PAP) therapy, they need good patient education on OSA, its cause and comorbidities, a review of their sleep study results, what PAP therapy is, how it works and why PAP therapy is a good treatment for them. It can take months to get in to see a sleep physician after diagnosis and patients often spend that waiting period untreated. If they can see a CCSH professional soon after diagnosis, they can go through all of the above, and their therapy can get started right away. They can then follow up with the sleep physician post-setup from the CCSH. Another benefit to this is if there is a problem with therapy, it is identified quickly and can be addressed sooner by the physician. The CCSH can also educate patients on comorbid sleep disorders, i.e., restless legs syndrome (RLS), periodic limb movement disorder (PLMD) and insomnia as well. The patient that has a good understanding of their sleep disorder and

why treatment is necessary is generally more likely to be compliant with and do well with PAP therapy.

SS: I see more technologists and health care professionals pursuing and obtaining the CCSH, which will drive healthier patients and communities.

What is something about the CCSH credential that you wish more people knew about?

BD: The CCSH can help professionals recognize symptoms of underlying health issues, help their patients learn how to improve their day-to-day habits and help them to ask the right questions for better care and management of their sleep disorders.

AE: Using another resource like a CCSH can add value in the sleep community.

CM: There is more than one way to use the credential, and the knowledge gained while studying the necessary information to obtain the credential is invaluable. Other than the ways already stated to use the credential, an in-hospital sleep educator can help educate inpatients on sleep disorders, link them to their comorbidities and current condition, and guide them through the diagnostic process. Also, public education about sleep is extremely important and necessary.

SS: It will help with your PAP titration studies, especially re-titration studies where downloads are available for review. The CCSH covers therapies with PAP download scenarios.

What advice do you have for someone contemplating obtaining the CCSH credential?

BD: I want to encourage people to expand their knowledge and understanding of different sleep disorders and patient education. Pursuing the CCSH credential provides clinical education for professionals wishing to make a more significant difference in the lives of their patients and those who struggle with sleep disorders.

AE: The CCSH credential adds another dimension to gaining more sleep knowledge.

CM: My advice would be that you should really like helping people understand their sleep disorders and helping them with their therapy, as well as seeing them through the whole process. Many people are resistant at first and these people tend to need your help most of all.

SS: You will notice your core knowledge has improved, and you will have more confidence in your career. The CCSH credential will prepare you for transitioning into other sleep medicine areas when the call presents.

Anything else you'd like to share?

BD: I see the CCSH credential as a promise. The more we do with this credential in our hands, the higher we elevate it and its possibilities.

CM: Sleep medicine is always changing and evolving. Attaining a higher level of knowledge, staying current and adapting to new ideas and information are vital to any sleep professional.

SS: Have a growth mindset and embrace knowledge and change. It will help you and those around you. Sleep well, everyone. 🌙



BETSY DAUPHIN, RRT, CCSH, joined BetterNight in 2015 as a sleep care specialist. Over the last six years, she has grown in the

field of sleep medicine as a registered respiratory therapist that is licensed in 40 states. She obtained the CCSH credential in 2020. Dauphin has been a research coordinator on multiple Institutional Review Boards-approved research studies and enjoys participating in any research that adds value to the field of sleep medicine.



CHERYL MEMMINI, RRT, RPSGT, CCSH, has been in health care for 35 years as a respiratory therapist, a sleep technologist and a clinical sleep educator. She is married and has four adult children and a menagerie of dogs and cats.



SALVATORE "SAM" SARULLO, RPSGT, CCSH, began his sleep industry journey in 2003 with on-the-job training at a private sleep lab and eventually advanced into a reputable health system in Illinois. With dedication and support, he has been able to grow and participate in multiple programs and implementations, and also work alongside exceptional technologists, medical directors and administrators. He has a passion for technology and became an EPIC analyst for a short period before transitioning back to sleep medicine.

ANDREA EARLY, RPSGT, CCSH, has been a respiratory care practitioner since 1998, a clinical sleep educator since 2013 and has held her CCSH credential since 2016. She has worked in multiple care settings including a hospital intensive care unit, a pulmonary rehab facility, home care and a pulmonary and sleep clinic.



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